

SUPERFUND: THE FIRST PROGRAM OF ITS KIND

It was late 1970, and the threat posed by hazardous wastes to human health was catapulted to national attention by Love Canal near Niagara Falls, New York. The government declared it a disaster area when massive amounts of abandoned, buried hazardous waste were found to cause extensive contamination and pose an immediate threat to human health. Congress recognized that a federal program was needed to respond to such hazards.

In 1980 Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), commonly known as Superfund. This law created a tax on the chemical and petroleum industries and provided federal authority to respond directly to releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances that may endanger public health or the environment. The tax, which went to a trust fund to clean abandoned or uncontrolled hazardous waste sites, expired in December 1995.

In short, Superfund was created to: establish restrictions and requirements concerning closed and abandoned hazardous waste sites; make parties responsible for releases of hazardous waste at these sites liable for cleanup; and establish a trust fund to provide for cleanup when no responsible party can be identified.

HOW DOES SUPERFUND RESPOND?

Superfund responds to hazardous waste releases in one of two ways:

1. Short-term removals, where actions may be taken to address releases or threatened releases requiring prompt response. See page 6 for more information on Superfund's emergency removal program in Pennsylvania.
2. Long-term remedial response actions, that permanently and significantly reduce the dangers associated with releases or threats of releases of hazardous substances that are serious, but do not pose an immediate health threat. Remedial cleanups are conducted at sites listed on EPA's National Priorities List (NPL). See page 4 to review how a site gets listed on the NPL.

Cleaning a Superfund site is a complex, multi-year process, so 'completing construction' is a noteworthy milestone in the remedial process. A site is construction complete when physical construction of all cleanup remedies is finished, all immediate threats have been addressed, and all long-term threats are under control.

SUPERFUND: EVOLVING TO MEET THE PUBLIC'S NEEDS

The Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) amended CERCLA in 1986, making several dramatic changes to the program including: increased state involvement in the Superfund process; greater citizen participation in site cleanup decisions; greater focus on using innovative cleanup technologies, and improved enforcement authorities and settlement tools.

SUPERFUND: A BRIEF BACKGROUND

These tools have helped EPA's efforts to settle cases quickly and to ensure that potentially responsible parties (PRPs) for the sites pay their fair share of cleanup costs. Region III, at approximately 80 percent, outpaces the nation for the number of sites where responsible parties are designing upcoming Superfund cleanups. In addition, we've removed over 1600 small-volume waste contributors, the little guys who were caught in the liability web by other parties.

While Congress contemplates another reauthorization of CERCLA and SARA, EPA has implemented three rounds of administrative reforms since 1993 to make Superfund even faster, fairer and more efficient. Broad in scope, these reforms have improved cleanup processes, focused on economic redevelopment issues, encouraged greater public participation, and empowered states. A strong indicator of the reforms' success is the fast-growing number sites on the NPL where construction has been completed.

And the job doesn't end there. Once construction is complete, a considerable amount of work remains to ensure remedies remain protective. Region III currently performs regular five-year reviews at approximately **150 sites** after construction has been completed and closely monitors all sites where long-term groundwater cleanup is being conducted.

In Pennsylvania, EPA is conducting long-term monitoring at **42 sites**. This number is expected to rise in the following years as more and more sites are cleaned.

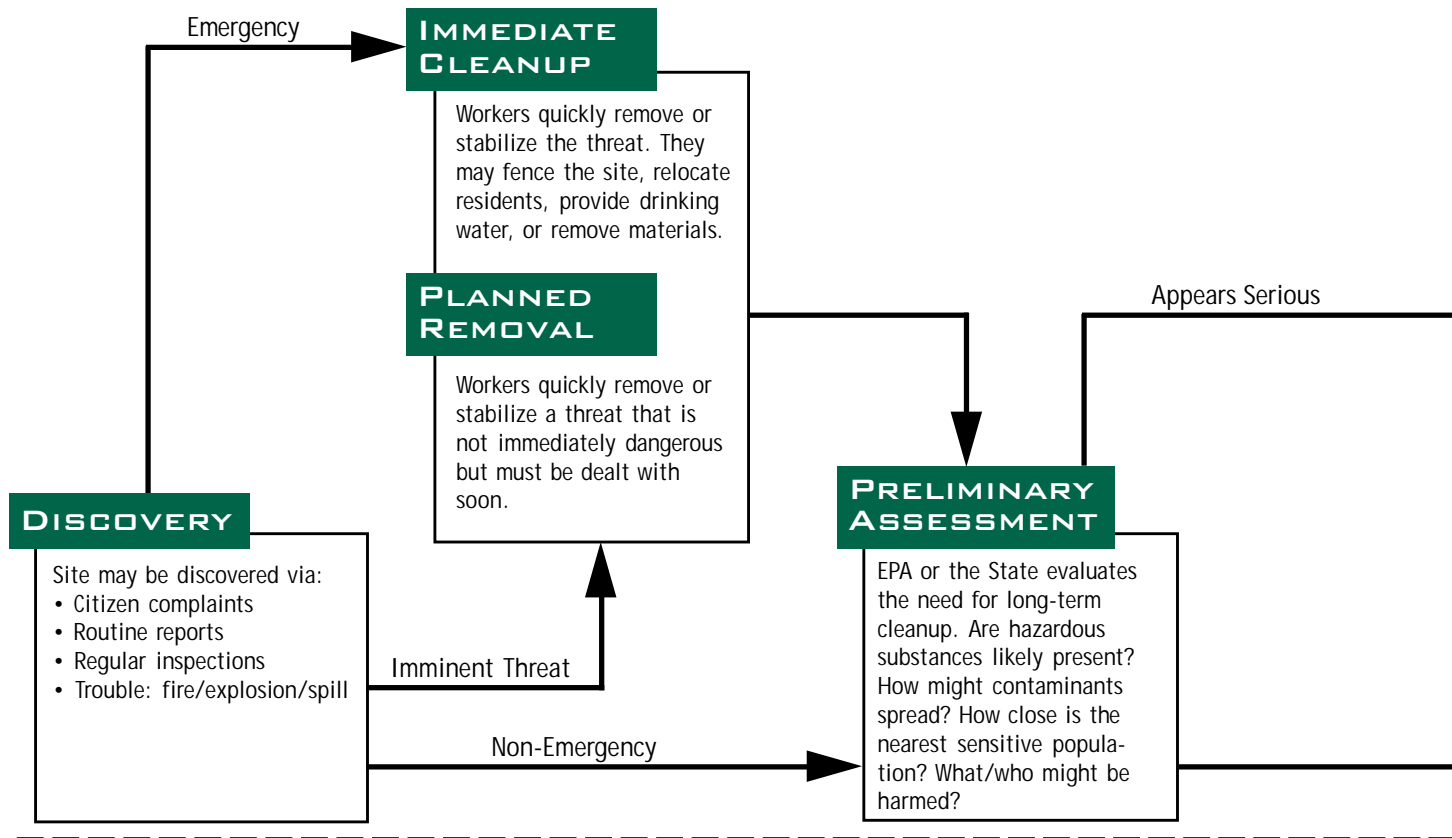
SUPERFUND FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

A results-driven program, Region III Superfund remains focused on completing construction at Superfund sites while continuing to implement its widely successful administrative reforms. Working closely with state and local partners, we're confident we can reach even more cleanup milestones using the newest and most innovative treatment technologies available today.

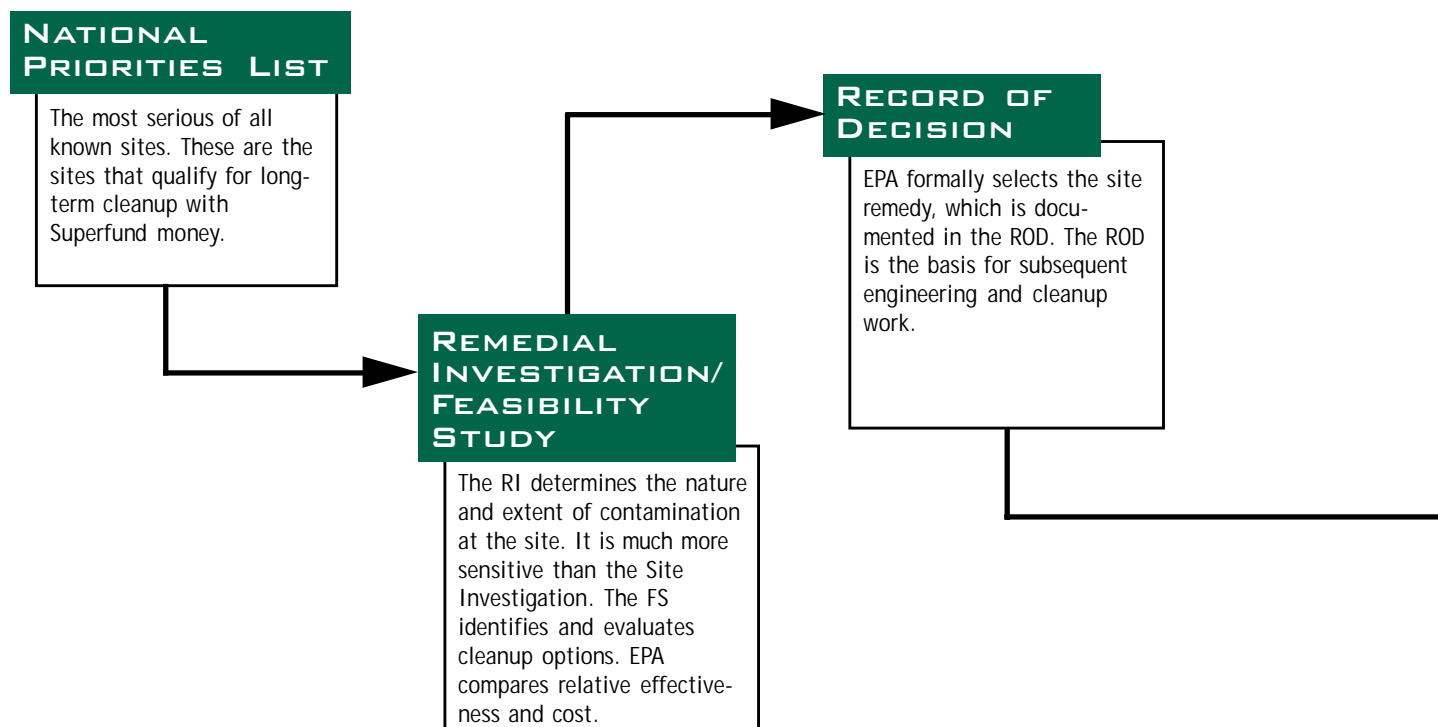
EPA in the Mid-Atlantic region is particularly proud of our work in selecting protective remedies that help pave the way for the redevelopment of Superfund sites. We firmly believe that proper consideration of a site's future reuse is necessary to selecting proper remedies, and we look forward to continued partnerships with communities, local and state governments to facilitate even more instances of productive reuse of once hazardous waste sites.

SUPERFUND TACKLES HAZARDOUS WASTE EMERGENCIES

SITE DISCOVERY AND STUDY:



LONG-TERM CLEANUP:



Superfund 101

